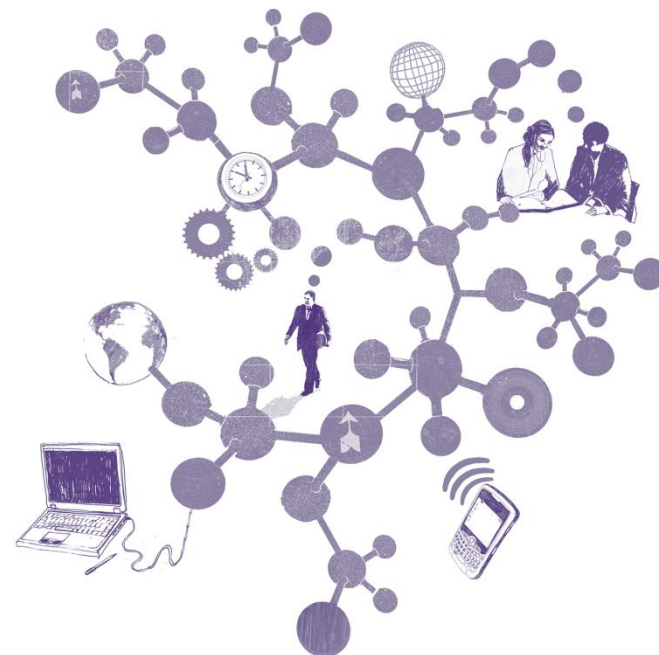


Certification report 2012/13 for Halton Council

Year ended 31 March 2013
24 February 2014

Mike Thomas
Engagement Lead
T 0161 214 6368
E mike.thomas@uk.gt.com

Liz Temple-Murray
Audit Manager
T 0161 214 6370
E liz.m.temple-murray@uk.gt.com



Contents

Section	Page
1. Executive summary	3
2. Results of our certification work	6
Appendices	
A Details of claims and returns certified for 2012/13	9
B Action plan	10
C Fees	11

Section 1: Executive summary

01. Executive summary

02. Results of our certification work

Executive summary

Introduction

We are required to certify certain claims and returns submitted by Halton Council ('the Council'). This certification typically takes place six to nine months after the claim period and represents a final but important part of the process to confirm the Council's entitlement to funding.

We have certified 4 claims and returns for the financial year 2012/13 relating to expenditure of £126 million.

This report summarises our overall assessment of the Council's management arrangements in respect of the certification process and draws attention to significant matters in relation to individual claims.




Approach and context to certification

Arrangements for certification are prescribed by the Audit Commission, which agrees the scope of the work with each relevant government department or agency, and issues auditors with a Certification Instruction (CI) for each specific claim or return.

Our approach to certification work, the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved and the scope of the work we perform were set out in our Certification Plan issued to the Council on 16 July 2013.

Key messages

A summary of all claims and returns subject to certification is provided at Appendix A. The key messages from our certification work are summarised in the table opposite and set out in detail in the next section of the report.

Aspect of certification arrangements	Key Messages	RAG rating
Submission & certification	All four claims were submitted on time and all claims were certified within the deadlines.	 Green
Accuracy of claim forms submitted to the auditor (including amendments & qualifications)	Three claims were subject to amendment, no qualification letters were issued. The Housing Benefit return was amended for a decrease of £235 payable and the Teachers Pensions return for an increase of £44 payable. The Local transport Plan Major Projects return for Silver Jubilee Bridge was amended although this did not have a financial impact on the value of the claim. Key messages are set out in detail within the significant findings on page 7.	 Amber
Supporting working papers	Working papers for all claims were satisfactory. Support from Housing Benefit staff combined with timely receipt of information enabled the certification process to proceed in an efficient manner.	 Green

The way forward

We set out recommendations to address the key messages above and other findings arising from our certification work at Appendix B.

Implementation of the agreed recommendations will assist the Council in compiling accurate and timely claims for certification. This will reduce the risk of penalties for late submission, potential repayment of grant and additional fees.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council officers for their assistance and co-operation during the course of the certification process.

Grant Thornton UK LLP
24 February 2014

Section 2: Results of our certification work

01. Executive summary

02. Results of our certification work

Results of our certification work

Key messages

We have certified 4 claims and returns for the financial year 2012/13 relating to expenditure of £126 million.

The Council's performance in preparing claims and returns is summarised below:

Performance measure	Target	Achievement in 2012/13		Achievement in 2011/12		Direction of travel
		No.	%	No.	%	
Claims submitted on time	100%	4	100	4	100	↔
Claims certified on time	100%	4	100	4	100	↔
Claims certified with amendment	0%	3	75	3	75	↔
Claims certified with qualification	0%	0	0	0	0	↔

This analysis of performance shows that:

- All claims were submitted on time for audit and were certified on time.
- Three claims were certified with amendments.
- No claims were certified with a qualification letter.

Details of the certification of all claims and returns are included at Appendix C.

Significant findings

Our work has not identified any issues in relation to the management arrangements and certification of individual grant claims and returns:

Certification fees

The Audit Commission set an indicative scale fee for grant claim certification based on 2010/11 certification fees for each audited body. This indicative fee did not include the certification of the Silver Jubilee Bridge Local Transport Plan and so has been amended from £14,350 to include the new claim this year. The indicative scale fee for the Council for 2012/13 is £15,729.

Appendices

Appendix A: Details of claims and returns certified for 2012/13

Claim or return	Value	Amended?	Amendment (£)	Qualified?	Comments
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Subsidy Return – MPF720A	£66,604,013.00	Yes	£235	No	Amendment on the total subsidy claimed cell relating to un-cashed cheques.
National Non-Domestic Rates Return – NNDR3	£47,595,645.64	No	Nil	No	
Teachers Pensions Return – EOYCd/Feb 2013	£7,597,207.75	Yes	£44	No	Amendment on the contributions deducted cell.
Local Transport Plan Major Projects – Silver Jubilee Bridge	£4,745,000.00	Yes	Nil	No	Amendment did not have a financial impact on the claim.

Appendix B: Action plan – Halton grant claims and returns 2012/13

Priority

High - Significant effect on arrangements

Medium – Some effect on arrangements

Low - Best practice

Rec No.	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Implementation date & responsibility
1	Ensure there is a robust quality assurance process to minimise amendments to the claims.	Low	We will review the quality assurance process to grant claims to ensure there is a consistent approach applied to the final checking and submission of all grant claims.	April 2014 Divisional Manager – Financial Management

Appendix C: Fees

Claim or return	2011/12 fee (£) *	2012/13 indicative fee (£)	2012/13 actual fee (£)	Variance year on year (£)	Explanation for significant variances
Housing benefits subsidy claim	£17,229	£12,210	£12,210	-£5,019	The Council worked with us to complete the workbooks and helped to reduce our level of re-performance.
National non-domestic rates return	£1,276	£1,460	£1,460	£184	
Teachers Pension	£974	£680	£680	-£294	
Local Transport Plan Major Projects - Silver Jubilee Bridge	£1,780	£1,379	£1,379	-£401	Part A testing only completed in 2012/13
Total	£21,259	£15,729	£15,729	-£5,530	

* 2011/12 fee less 40% fee reduction applicable for 2012/13 onwards. This is shown in this way to make it comparable to the 2012/13 fee.



© 2013 Grant Thornton UK LLP. All rights reserved.

'Grant Thornton' means Grant Thornton UK LLP, a limited liability partnership.

Grant Thornton is a member firm of Grant Thornton International Ltd (Grant Thornton International). References to 'Grant Thornton' are to the brand under which the Grant Thornton member firms operate and refer to one or more member firms, as the context requires. Grant Thornton International and the member firms are not a worldwide partnership. Services are delivered independently by member firms, which are not responsible for the services or activities of one another. Grant Thornton International does not provide services to clients.

grant-thornton.co.uk